CERTAIN

Cases of Conscience RESOLVED,

Concerning the

Lawfulness of Joyning WITH

Forms of Prayer IN Publick Worship.

PART I.

VIZ.

I. Whether the using of Forms of Prayer, doth not stint and limit the Spirit.

II. Whether the using Publick Forms of Prayer be not a sinful omission of the Ministerial Gift of Prayer.

III. Whether Praying by a Publick Form doth not deaden the Devotion of Prayer.

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A RESOLUTION OF THE Cases of Conscience,

Which concern the Use of

FORMS of PRAYER.

ONE of the main Points which our dissenting Brethren insist on to justifie their Separation from our Church, is, That our Publick Worship is perform'd in a Form of Words of Man's Invention; which, they conceive, is unlawful; for hereby, say some of them, the Holy Spirit, who inspires our Prayer, is stinted and limited, and hereby the Gift of Prayer, say others, which the Holy Spirit communicates to Ministers, to enable them to express the Devotions of their Congregations to God, is rendred useless; and not only so, but even the Devotions of the Congregation too are mightily deaden'd, by being continually express'd in the same form of words: besides, that the wants of Christians being various, casual, and emergent, cannot be so fully re-

 presented

presented in a fixt Form, as in conceiv'd Prayers, which upon the account of their variation in Expressions, may be the better extended to the continual variations of Mens cases and circumstances: besides all which, say they, we have no warrant for the use of Forms, either in Scripture, or pure Antiquity; and if we had, yet an universal imposition of them, can by no means be lawfully compli'd with: this, according to the best recollection I can make, is the sum of what our Brethren urge against the lawfulness of joyning with us in a stated Liturgy, or Form of Publick Worship: and therefore, in order to the satisfying their Consciences in this matter, I shall reduce their whole Plea to these following Cases, and indeavour a plain and clear resolution of them.

1. *Whether Praying in a Form of Words, doth not stint or limit the Spirit of Prayer?*
2. *Whether the Use of Publick Forms of Prayer, be not a sinful neglect of the Ministerial Gift of Prayer?*
3. *Whether the constant Use of the same Form of Prayer, doth not very much deaden the Devotion of Prayer?*
4. *Whether the common wants of Christian Congregations may not be better represented in conceiv'd Prayer, than in a Form of Prayer?*
5. *Whether there be any warrant for Forms of Prayer, either in Scripture, or pure Antiquity?*
6. *Whether, supposing Forms to be lawful, the imposition of them can be lawfully compli'd with?*

Case.

Case I.

Whether Praying in a Form of Words, doth not stint and limit the Spirit of Prayer?

In order to the resolution of this Case, it will be necessary to explain first, what it is that the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer; and secondly, what is meant by stinting or limiting the Spirit in Prayer.

1. What is it that the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer? I answer, there are some things attributed to him which were extraordinary, and temporary; and others that are ordinary, fixt, and standing: The through state and distinguishing of which will very much contribute to the resolution of this present Case, and therefore I shall insist more largely upon it.

First, I say there are some things attributed to the Holy Spirit in this matter of Prayer which were extraordinary and temporary; and that was the immediate Inspiration of the matter of Prayer, together with an ability to express and utter it in known or unknown Languages: thus as for the immediate inspiration of the matter of Prayer, we read in the Old Testament of Prayers and Praises, which, upon special occasions, were immediately indited by Divine Inspiration: for so when *Hannah* presented her Son to the Lord in *Shiloh*, the Text only saith, that she praid, and said; but the *Targum* paraphrases it, that she praid by the Spirit of Prophesie, and accordingly praying and praising by immediate inspiration, is frequently call'd prophesying: So 1 *Sam.* 10. 5. *The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesie*; that is, as Expositors generally interpret it, thou shalt utter Spiritual Psalms and Hymns by immediate in-

ſpiration on the place; and to the ſame purpoſe is the word uſed *Numb.* 11. 25. 1 *Chron.* 25. 1. and accordingly in the New Teſtament it is ſaid of *Zacharias*, *that he was filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and propheſied, ſaying, bleſſed be the Lord God of* Iſrael, *&c.* The matter of all which Prayers and Praiſes, together with thoſe in the Book of *Pſalms*, and ſundry others recorded in Scripture, was immediately dictated to thoſe inſpir'd perſons by the Holy Ghoſt, and deliver'd by them without any recourſe to their own invention or conſideration, though as to the words of them, it may be juſtly queſtion'd, whether they were not left to their own compoſure, as it ſeems very probable the words of all other inſpirations were; for conſidering how the inſpired perſons differ'd in their ſtile, according as they differ'd in their education, in their natural parts, and intellectual improvements, it is very likely they themſelves compoſed and worded their own inſpirations, the Spirit of God taking care only ſo to overſee and direct them, that their words might not miſrepreſent their matter; and if ſo, how much leſs reaſon have we to ſuppoſe, that the Spirit inſpires the words of our Prayers: but this I ſhall not inſiſt on.

However, after that great deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt at *Penteceſt*, wherein the gift of Tongues was communicated to enable the firſt Planters of the Goſpel, to propagate it through the World, it's certain that not only the Matter of their Prayers, but even the very Language too in which they expreſs them, was immediately inſpired, inſomuch that they were not only inabled to Pray upon the place in apt and fluent Expreſſions, but alſo to Pray in Languages, which they never underſtood before, and which even then they underſtood but very imperfectly, and alſo to interpret

thoſe

those Prayers into the vulgar Language, which themselves or others had utter'd in unknown Tongues; and this, among others, the Apostle calls a Spiritual Gift, 1 *Cor.* 12. 1. which, as I remember, is the only place where the Gift of Prayer is mention'd in Scripture: and in 1 *Cor.* 14. 14. it is also call'd a Spirit, where he gives us an account at large of this miraculous way of praying.

Now that this miraculous Gift of praying in, and interpreting Prayers out of unknown Tongues was extraordinary, and temporary, and peculiar to the Primitive Ages of Christianity, is evident, because the design of it was not only to enable the first Planters of the Gospel to perform their Ministerial Office in the vulgar Languages of the several Nations they were sent to, but also to be a sign from God, as all other Miracles were, for the confirmation of the Gospel; for so the Apostle tells us, 1 *Cor.* 14. 22. *That Tongues were for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:* and therefore since it's granted of all hands, that the gift of Miracles was extraordinary, and intended only for a demonstration of the Gospel to the Infidel World, and after that to cease, there can be no doubt but this miraculous Gift of Prayer was so too.

But that the Spirit's inditing the Matter, and, if you will, the words of those inspired Prayers, was also extraordinary, will require a larger proof; because it is look'd upon by many of our dissenting Brethren as an ordinary and standing Gift, which the Spirit doth and will communicate to all successive Ages of the World. Against this Opinion of theirs, therefore I shall briefly offer these following Reasons to their consideration:

1. That

1. That there is no promiſe of any ſuch Gift, and therefore no reaſon to expect the continuance of it. For whatſoever ſtanding and ordinary benefits we receive from God, we receive them by vertue of the New Covenant, in which he hath promiſed to us all thoſe good things which we can reaſonably expect at his hands; and the promiſe of God being the only foundation of our hope, it is preſumption to promiſe our ſelves what he hath not promiſed us: but now in all the New Covenant we have not the leaſt intimation of any ſuch promiſe, *viz.* That the Spirit will immediately indite to us the Matter and Expreſſions of our Prayers; For as for that of *Zachary* 12. 10. Which is the only promiſe that is pretended in the caſe, it's evident, at firſt ſight, that it's nothing to the purpoſe; *I will pour out upon the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem *the Spirit of Grace and Supplications, and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierc'd, and they ſhall mourn.* What is all this to the immediate inſpiration of the Matter and Expreſſions of our Prayer, when it's plain, that the Spirit of Supplication here is the ſame with the Spirit of Grace, or of inward Piety and Devotion? even as the following words imply, *and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn:* that is, for their horrid ſin of crucifying me. But that there is no ſuch promiſe in the New Covenant is evident, from what is acknowledged of all hands, *viz.* That there are many good Chriſtians who could never pretend to any ſuch inſpiration, who are ſome of them fain to be beholding to their own recollection and invention for the Matter and Words of their Prayers, and others, for want of a ſufficient quickneſs of invention, to be beholding to Forms of Prayer of other mens compoſure; neither of which they need, were they immediately inſpir'd: And I am very confident

'twould

'twould be look'd upon by all sober Dissenters as a very rash and unjust censure to affirm, that a man cannot be a good Christian, who doth not pray by immediate inspiration, but is always fain to depend either on his own invention, or a Form of Prayer for the Matter and Expressions of his Devotions: and if so, how can this consist with a standing promise of immediate inspiration of Prayer in the New Covenant? unless we will suppose that there are Blessings promised in the New Covenant, to which good Christians may have no right or title, and of which they may never actually partake, which is utterly to destroy the nature of the Covenant, which extends to all who perform the conditions of it, and to cut off all our dependance upon it.

2. That as there is no promise, so there is no need of any such immediate inspiration. 'Tis true, Christ hath promised by his Spirit, to be with us to the end of the World, and assur'd us, that he will give his Spirit unto every one that asks, and to what end hath he promised this, but only to supply our Necessities, and inable us to perform those Duties, which, through our own impotency, we cannot perform without him? for so he argues from the readiness of Parents, to supply their Children with what is necessary to their bodily life and subsistence, to the readiness of God to bestow his Spirit (that is to all the purposes that are necessary to their Spiritual Life, as the parallel plainly implies) upon them that ask him. So that all we can expect by vertue of these promises is only this, That the Spirit of God will be ready to aid and assist us in all those necessary cases, wherein our Duty and Spiritual Life is concern'd; and therefore if there be no necessity of an immediate inspiration of either Matter or Words to inable us to Pray, it is an unwarrantable presumption

to

to expect it by vertue of these or such like promises.

And that there is no necessity, I conceive, is very apparent; for,

First, As for the Matter of our Prayers, the Holy Spirit hath already sufficiently reveal'd it to us in the Gospel, and as plainly instructed us what we are to pray for, as he can be suppos'd to do by any immediate inspiration: so that with a very little consideration, we may thence easily recollect what it is that we need, and what we are warranted and commanded to pray for; and for a summary of the whole, we need go no further than our Churches Catechism, which in answer to that Question, after the Lord's Prayer, *What desirest thou of God in this Prayer?* sums up the whole matter of our Prayer in a few, plain, and easie words. And to suppose, after such a clear revelation of the matter of Prayer, a necessity of immediate inspiration of it, is in effect to suppose, that we have neither reason enough to understand the sense of plain words, nor memory enough to retain and recollect it. But against this, that passage of St. *Paul* is objected by our Brethren, *Rom.* 8. 26. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be utter'd.* For which words, *We know not what to pray for as we ought*, they infer, that how plainly soever the matter of Prayer is reveal'd to us, we cannot in all cases know what it is without an immediate inspiration: which must either suppose, that all matter of Prayer is not plainly reveal'd to us, or that though it be, we cannot understand it; whereas the Apostles words imply neither the one nor t'other, for it's plain those words, *we know not what to pray for*, are not to be understood simply, but with reference to, *as we ought*; τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα

καθὸ

τὸ δὲ τί ἐν προσευξώμεθα, *for what to pray for as we ought, we know not*; which plainly refers to the manner, and not to the matter of our Prayer, how to pray for any thing with that fervency of desire, that dependance upon, and resignation to God, as we ought, of our selves, we know not without the assistance of the Spirit of God; if therefore the Spirit hath already sufficiently reveal'd to us, what the matter of Prayer is (as he must be suppos'd to do, if the Scriptures be sufficient) I see no reason why he should reveal it again by immediate inspiration; and if there be no necessity of it, I know no warrant we have to expect it. But then,

2. As for the Words of Prayer, by which we are to express the Matter of it, what necessity can there be that these should be immediately dictated to us, when as if we have not quickness enough of fancy and invention to express our wants and desires in our own words, we may readily supply that defect by Forms of Prayer of other Mens composure, which with very short additions and variations of our own, we may easily adapt to all our particular cases and circumstances? and to imagin that with such helps and assistances we cannot word our desires to God without an immediate inspiration, is to suppose, that we are meer whispering Pipes, that can breath out nothing but what is breath'd into us.

3. That as there is neither promise, nor need of any such immediate inspiration of Prayer, so there is no certain sign or testimony of it remaining among us: whenever God inspir'd men with Divine matter and words, his Way was always to attest the divinity of their inspiration with some certain sign by which themselves, and others, might be well assur'd of it; and though at this distance from the inspired Ages we cannot certainly determin by what token it was that

the Prophets knew the divinity of their own inſpirations while they were ſeiz'd with them; yet this we know, that after they were deliver'd of them, God always took care to atteſt them by ſome miraculous operation: for ſo Miracles are ſtyled by the Apoſtle, the evidence and demonſtration of the Spirit, as being the conſtant ſigns and tokens of Divine inſpiration; and indeed without ſuch ſigns to diſtinguiſh it from falſe pretences, we were better be without inſpiration, than with it, becauſe we ſhall be left under an unavoidable neceſſity, either of admitting all inſpirations which pretend to be divine, or of rejecting all that are truly ſo: as to inſtance in this caſe of Prayer, we know 'tis poſſible for men to have the matter and words of it dictated to them by a natural, or Diabolical, as well as a Divine Enthuſiaſm, and therefore it is highly requiſit if ſuch Divine Enthuſiaſm, or Inſpiration, be continu'd to us, that the proper ſigns and teſtimonies of it ſhould be continu'd too, that ſo we may be able to diſtinguiſh that which is divine, from that which is natural or diabolical; otherwiſe we muſt either conclude them all to be natural, or diabolical, or believe them all to be divine, and entertain them accordingly.

If you ſay there is no need of either, becauſe the Scripture is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh them; I anſwer; that though the Scripture may be ſufficient to diſtinguiſh the matter of the inſpiration, whether it be true or falſe, yet it is not ſufficient to diſtinguiſh the inſpiration it ſelf, whether it be divine, or natural, or diabolical: For

Firſt, as for natural Enthuſiaſm, it is not at all impoſſible for a man to pray agreeably to Scripture by natural inſpiration, by which I mean a natural or accidental fervency of temper, ariſing either from a conſtant

conſtant heat of conſtitution, or a caſual agitation of the ſpirits, occaſion'd either by vapours of heated melancholy, or an intermixture of ſharp and feaveriſh humours with the blood; which as all men know, who underſtand any thing of the nature and compoſition of humane bodies, naturally heightens and impregnates the fancy, and cauſes the images of things to come faſter into it, and appear more diſtinct in it, and conſequently produces a very ready invention of matter, and extraordinary fluency of words: ſo that if under a fit of this natural fervency, a man's fancy happens to run upon God and Religion, he cannot fail to pray with great readineſs and fluency, and ſometimes with that extraordinary paſſion and enlargement, as ſhall cauſe him aſſuredly to believe himſelf immediately inſpired by the Spirit of God: of the truth of which, inſtances enough might be given not only among Chriſtians, but alſo among the Devoto's of *Mahomet*, and the Poets and Orators of the Heathens, whoſe fancies have been very often ſo ſtrangely exalted by the fervour of their temper, or diſeaſe, that not only they themſelves, but they that heard them, believed that they were inſpired by God. Suppoſing then, that under a fit of this natural Enthuſiaſm a man ſhould pray agreeably to Scripture, how ſhall he be able to know by Scripture whether the preſent inſpiration he is under, be natural, or divine? and how will it be poſſible for him to avoid, many times, attributing the natural effects of his temper, or diſeaſe, to the immediate operation of the Spirit of God?

But you will ſay, we all agree that the Spirit of God inſpires good men with holy and fervent affections in their Prayers, and yet it cannot be deni'd that this fervency of affection doth ſometimes alſo proceed from the preſent temper of our bodies, notwith-

ſtanding which, we have no other ſign or teſtimony beſides that of Scripture, whereby to diſtinguiſh when 'tis divine, and when natural; doth not therefore the want of ſuch ſign as effectually conclude againſt the Spirits inſpiring the fervour of our Prayers, as againſt his inſpiring the matter and words of them? I anſwer, no; For, as for the former, we have a ſure word of promiſe, which we have not for the latter; and therefore if we can claim the promiſe, we have juſt reaſon to conclude when we feel our affections actually excited, that how much ſoever other cauſes might contribute to it, the Holy Spirit was the principal cauſe; but where we have no promiſe, we have no ground for ſuch concluſion: beſides which, we have no ſuch need of ſigns to enable us to diſtinguiſh in the one caſe, as in the other; For as for the inſpiration of affection, we may eaſily diſtinguiſh whether it be natural or divine, by our own ſenſe; if our preſent fervour be accompanied with a fixt and conſtant devotion of ſoul, we may certainly conclude, that the ſame Spirit which inſpired the one, inſpired the other; and whether it be ſo accompanied or no, that natural ſenſe and feeling we have of our own motions and affections, will quickly inform us, and we have no more need of an outward ſign to ſatisfie us in this matter, than we have to know whether we are hungry or thirſty: but if the preſent fervour of our affections in Prayer be only a ſudden fit and pang of devotion, that finds and leaves us habitually indevout, we have juſt reaſon to conclude, that 'tis intirely owing to our preſent bodily temper: whether therefore our affections in Prayer are inſpired by God, our own ſenſe will inform us, if we impartially conſult it; but whether our matter and words are ſo, no ſenſe we have can reſolve us: we may feel the matter of our Prayer pour in upon

upon us with extraordinary readineſs, and be inabled to pour it out again with extraordinary fluency, and yet all this may proceed from our own fancy and invention, quickned and enlarg'd by meerly natural Enthuſiaſm; and therefore, unleſs we had ſome other ſign, beſides that of Scripture, 'twill be impoſſible for us to diſtinguiſh between a divine and natural inſpiration of matter and words, becauſe that which is natural, may be as agreeable to Scripture, as that which is ſuppos'd to be divine; and God hath given us no inward ſenſe to diſtinguiſh betweeen one and t'other: and can it be imagin'd that had he meant to continue this Gift of inſpiration to us, he would have thus left us in the dark concerning it, without any certain ſign whereby we might diſtinguiſh, whether it be from his Spirit, or from an ill-affected Spleen, or a Feaver?

But then, ſecondly, as for Diabolical Inſpirations of Matter and Words in Prayer, we have ſundry very probable Inſtances, ſuch as Major *Weir*, who is ſaid to have received his Inſpirations through a Staff; *Hacket*; *David George*, and that Monſter of wickedneſs, *John Baſilides* Duke of *Ruſſia*, who were all of them poſſeſs'd with ſuch a wonderful Gift of Prayer, as did not only charm and raviſh thoſe that heard them, but ſeem'd, in the opinion of the moſt wiſe and impartial, to exceed the power of nature; which renders it very probable that the matter of their Prayers was for the moſt part agreeable to Scripture, otherwiſe 'tis hardly conceivable how they could have procured to themſelves ſo many admirers, and abuſed ſo many honeſt minds into a belief that they were immediately inſpired by God. And ſince by inſpiring his Votaries with ſuch matter of Prayer as is agreeable to Scripture, the Devil may ſometimes ſerve his own ends, ſince he may thereby puff up giddy minds with pride, and ſelf-conceit, and more effectually recommend Seducers and falſe

Teachers,

Teachers to the World; it's very reaſonable, to ſuppoſe that this ſubtle Agent who ſo throughly underſtands his own game, will in ſome caſe be forward enough to do it: and if in any caſes we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that the Devil may inſpire men with ſuch matter of Prayer as is agreeable to Scripture, then we can never certainly diſtinguiſh by Scripture, whether it be the Spirit of God, or the Devil, that inſpires us. And can we, without blaſpheming the goodneſs of God, imagin, that if he had continu'd this Gift of immediate inſpiration to us, he would have neglected to continue ſuch ſigns and teſtimonies of it as are neceſſary to diſtinguiſh it from the inſpirations of the Devil? doubtleſs 'tis much better for us that this Gift ſhould be totally withdrawn, and that as to the matter and expreſſions of our Prayer, we ſhould be left to the guidance of Scripture and Reaſon, than that by the continuance of it without ſome certain ſign to know and diſtinguiſh it, we ſhould be left under a fatal neceſſity, either of rejecting Divine Inſpirations, or of admitting Diabolical for Divine. And therefore ſince we have no ſuch ſign continu'd among us, we have all the reaſon in the world to conclude, that this Gift is diſcontinu'd, and ceas'd: eſpecially conſidering that we have not only no certain ſign of any ſuch inſpiration in the conceiv'd Prayers of thoſe which moſt pretend to it, but many very certain ones of the contrary; I will inſtance in four.

1. The great impertinence, and nonſenſe, and rudeneſs, to ſay no worſe, that are ſometimes mingled with theſe *Extempore* Prayers. I will not give Inſtances of this, becauſe it is ſo notorious, that our Brethren themſelves cannot but in part acknowledge it: now to attribute theſe faults of conceiv'd Prayers, to immediate inſpiration, would be to blaſpheme the Holy Ghoſt, and father

father our own follies upon him, and yet ſure had he thought meet to have continu'd to the Church this Gift of inſpiration of Prayer, it would have been in order to the ſecuring the Worſhip of God from thoſe rudeneſſes and indecencies to which extemporary Prayers of mens own conceiving are liable; and if ſo, to be ſure in publick Prayer at leaſt, he would have conſtantly taken care to inſpire ſuch matter as is fit to be offer'd up to God, and ſuch expreſſions as are fit for ſuch matter; that ſo the Publick Worſhip of God, which is the moſt ſerious and ſolemn thing in the World, might not be render'd ridiculous by the folly and inadvertency of men. Whereas on the contrary, we ſee thoſe publick Prayers which arrogate to themſelves the honour of being inſpired, are generally more liable to theſe indecencies, than Forms of humane compoſure, and that thoſe Prayers which conſiſt of premeditated matter and words, are commonly much better ſenſe, and far more decent and pertinent, than our extemporary effuſions; which how it ſhould come to paſs I know not, ſuppoſing the continuance of inſpiration of Prayer, unleſs we will ſuppoſe, that Humane Compoſures may exceed Divine Inſpirations, and that men may ordinarily premeditate better Prayers than the Spirit of God inſpires. And methinks it ſeems very ſtrange, that the Spirit ſhould continue this Gift of inſpiration to ſecure the Worſhip of God from nonſenſe and impertinence, and yet that after all, it ſhould remain more liable to theſe indecencies, than if our publick Prayers were offered up in premeditated Forms, compoſed out of our own or other mens inventions.

2. Another ſign that our compoſed Prayers are not immediately inſpired is, that they are ſo generally tinctur'd with the particular opinions of thoſe that offer them. You may obſerve that in all publick Con-

troverſies

troverſies of Religion, mens Opinions are generally to be known by their Prayers, eſpecially if they zealouſly eſpouſe either ſide of the Queſtion: for then the debate runs ſo much in their heads, and they look upon God and Religion ſo very highly concern'd in it, that they can hardly frame a Petition, Confeſſion, or thankſgiving, without giving ſome intimation of their particular Perſwaſion; and many times one of the Petitions is, *That God would hinder the propagation of the contrary Perſwaſion, and convince their Adverſaries of the Error and Falſhood of it.* Thus for inſtance, when the Conteſt ran high between the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, the *Arminians* and *Calviniſts*, how eaſie was it to diſtinguiſh them by their Prayers from one another? Whether this be not ſo, I appeal to our Brethren themſelves, and to all the World? And if ſo, what plainer evidence can be given, that their Prayers were not inſpired, but of their own invention, and compoſure? For either we muſt ſuppoſe this Gift of Inſpiration to be confin'd to one Party, which would be to ſtint the Spirit with a witneſs, and everlaſtingly to puzzle our ſelves where to find it, among ſo many contending Parties that pretend to it; or elſe we muſt affirm a horrid Blaſphemy, *viz.* That the Spirit inſpires Contradictions, and indites contrary Prayers to men of oppoſite Parties.

3. Another plain ſign that our conceiv'd Prayers are not immediately inſpired is, That that which gives them the reputation of being ſo, is not ſo much the matter, as the way and manner of expreſſing them. For as for the matter of Prayer, I ſuppoſe our Brethren will not deny, but our Forms may equal at leaſt, if not exceed their conceiv'd and extemporary Prayers, and that 'tis poſſible for men, upon mature thoughts and deliberations, to compoſe and pen a Prayer, that

ſhall

shall be as full and comprehensive of the common cases, and necessities of Christians, as if he had conceived, and indited it upon the place. And if all the matter that is in a conceiv'd Prayer, may be easily contain'd and expres'd in a Form, then all the difference between one and t'other must lie in the way, and manner of expressing it, and consequently it must be only upon this account, that the one must pretend to inspiration more than t'other. Now there are only two differences between Forms, and conceived Prayers, as to the way, and manner of expressing the matter in them; neither of which are so considerable, as to give the one a fair propence to inspiration than the other. The first is, that whereas the matter of a Form of Prayer is express'd in set, and premeditated words, the same matter in conceiv'd Prayer is express'd in extemporary words, and is no strange, that upon such a slight, and inconsiderable difference, the one should be thought to be more inspired than the other; as if the Spirit of God continu'd the Gift of Inspiration to no other purpose, but to inable men to ask those Blessings in extemporary words, which they might as well have ask'd in premeditated ones. The second is, that conceiv'd Prayers do generally more inlarge and amplifie on the matter of Prayer, than Forms, in which we being always tied to such a set of words, have not that liberty to expatiate on our several cases, and necessities, but this is so far from adding to the value of conceiv'd Prayers, that it rather lessens, and depreciates them; for if you observe these admired enlargements, and amplifications, and generally nothing else but only the same matter express'd again in different words, which makes your conceiv'd Prayers run out many times to an undue length, the same matter being repeated in them over and over in-

varied phrases and expressions: how then can we entertain such mean conceits of the wisdom of the holy Spirit, as to imagine he should continue to us the Gift of immediate inspiration, merely to enable us to repeat the same matter of Prayer to God ten or twenty times over, in different phrases and expressions? especially considering that by so doing he would cross the orders of our Saviour, who expressly forbids us in our Prayers to *use vain repetitions*, (or as *Munster's Hebrew* reads it, *to multiply words about what is fit and seasonable*) *thinking we shall be heard for our much speaking*; to which he subjoins this reason, *For your father knows what things you have need of before you ask him*, Matth. 6. 7, 8. As if he should have said you need not lengthen out your Prayers with so many copious enlargements, and varied repetitions of the same matter, as if you meant thereby more fully to inform your Father in your wants and desires, for before ever you ask, he knows your needs, and therefore a few words will suffice to express your desires to him. And when our Saviour hath required that our Prayers should be short, and pithy, and free of all needless multiplicity of words, what reason have we to think that the Holy Spirit, who is his Vicegerent in the Church, would continue the Gift of Inspiration merely to amplify and enlarge them? These enlargements of conceiv'd Prayer therefore, are so far from being signs of their immediate inspiration, that supposing the Spirit to be of the same mind with our Saviour, they are generally signs of the contrary.

Another plain sign that our conceiv'd Prayers are not immediately inspired is, That the extraordinary manner, and way of expressing them in, for which they are thought to be inspired, doth apparently proceed from natural causes: for, as I shew'd before, the rea-

son why our conceiv'd Prayers are thought by us and others to be inspired is, that we are many times enabled in them to enlarge the matter, with so much readiness, and fluency; which may be easily resolv'd into meer natural Enthusiasm, or pretence of fervour of temper. And that from hence this fluency and enlargement in Prayer doth ordinarily proceed, seems very evident by two undeniable signs; first, that according to our Brethrens own confession, it comes upon them much oftener in their publick, than in their private Devotions. For this is an ordinary case in their Divinity; how comes it to pass that good men often find themselves so enlarg'd in their publick and so strengthen'd in their private Prayers? And indeed, supposing the Spirit did ordinarily inspire the matter and words of their Prayer, I see not how it could be well resolv'd, unless we suppose the Spirit to be more concern'd to inspire us with fluency of matter and words, when we are to speak before men, than when we are only to speak before God. The true resolution therefore of the case is this, that in our private Prayers we want the sighs, and groans, and passionate gestures of a devout Congregation, to chafe and excite our affections, and the reverence of a numerous Auditory, to oblige us to teaz and wrack our inventions; for want of which our spirits are not ordinarily so vehemently agitated and heated as when we Pray in publick; where being more than ordinarily warm'd, partly with our own efforts and struglings, to invent, and partly with the warmths and pious fervours of the Congregation, we are many times transported by this natural Enthusiasm, into raptures of passion and inlargement; this I say is the only reason that can be assign'd of it, unless we will suppose that which is very unsupposeable of the Spirit of God, *viz.* That he is more solicitous to indite our

Prayers, when we are in the presence of men, than when we are only in the presence of God. Secondly, Another sign that this admired fluency and enlargement in Prayer proceeds from meer natural Enthusiasm is this, that generally in the beginning of the Prayer they find themselves streighten'd and confin'd, both as to the matter and words of it, till they have Pray'd on for a while, and then they grow more ready and fluent; which how it should come to pass, I know not, supposing the Prayer were inspired, unless perhaps the Spirit comes in only in the middle, or towards the latter end of their Prayer, but leaves them to their own invention in the beginning; and what reason there should be for such an imagination, I confess I am not able to guess. The true account therefore of the matter is this, that in the beginning of the Prayer their Spirits are usually dull, and sluggish, and do not flow and reflow so briskly to their heads and hearts as afterwards, when they have been throughly chaft and heated with a labour and exercise of invention; by which being excited and awaken'd, they naturally raise the drooping fancy, and render the invention more copious, fluent, and easie. So that meerly by the Laws of Matter and Motion, as plain an account may be given of this extemporary fluency, and enlargement of Prayer, as of any other natural effect whatsoever; and therefore for our Brethren to attribute to the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, that which hath such apparent signs of its derivation from natural causes, is, I conceive, very unwarrantable. By all which, I think, it's very evident, not only that we have no sign of the continuance of this Gift of Inspiration of Prayer remaining among us, but that we have manifest signs of the contrary.

4. And

4. And lastly, That to suppose the continuance of this Gift of Inspiration of Prayer, is to suppose more than our Brethren themselves will allow of, viz. That their conceiv'd Prayers are infallible, and of equal authority with the Word of God. For if our Prayers are dictated to us by the Spirit of God, they must be as infallible as he, whose infinite knowledge cannot suffer him to be deceiv'd, and whose infinite veracity will not admit him to deceive: and if so, then whatsoever he dictates, or inspires, must be remov'd from all possibility of error, or mistake; and consequently our Prayers must be so too, supposing he inspires the matter and words of them. And as they must be infallible in themselves, so they must be of equal authority with Scripture: for that which gives the Scriptures the authority of the Word of God, is, their being inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore whatsoever matter or words are so inspired, are as much the Word of God, as any matter or words in Scripture: *All Scripture is given*, saith the Apostle, *by the Inspiration of God*. And therefore whatsoever is given by his Inspiration, must necessarily be his Word: for what those Holy Men of God spake, who deliver'd the Scripture, they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 1 *Pet.* 1. 21. and therefore what they deliver'd was the Word of God, because their Mouths were the Oracles through which God spake; if therefore when we Pray, we are mov'd, as they were, by the immediate inspiration of God, what we pray, must be as much the Word of God, as what they spake. So that either our Brethren must affirm, that their conceiv'd Prayers are of equal authority with Scripture, (which I am sure no sober Dissenter will presume) or deny that they are immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost.

And

And thus I have shewn what those extraordinary Operations are, which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer. I proceed in the next place to enquire what the ordinary and standing Operations are, which the Scripture attributes to him, and which he hath promised to continue to the end of the World. Of which I shall give but a very brief account, because herein we are all agreed.

In short therefore, the ordinary Operations of the Spirit consist in exciting in us the graces and proper affections of Prayer, such as shame and sorrow in the confession of our sins, a sense of our need of mercy, and a hope of obtaining it in our supplications for pardon, resignation to God's will, and dependance on his goodness in our Prayers for temporal mercies, and deliverances, hunger and thirst after righteousness in our Petitions for his grace and assistance, and in a word, gratitude, and love, and admiration of God in our Praises and Thanksgivings for Mercy. For in these divine and gracious Affections, the life and soul of Prayer consists: as for the Words and Expressions of it, about which our Brethren disagree with us, they are of no other account with God, than as they signifie to him the graces and affections of our Prayers, without which he regards them no more, than he doth the whistling of the wind; and therefore since these affections are the main of our Prayer, and words are nothing in his account in comparison with them; can any man be so vain as to imagin, that those affections will be ever a whit the less acceptable to him, because they are presented in a form of words, and not in extemporary Effusions? Sure that Father would be very capricious, that should deny Bread to his hungry Child, meerly because he askt it to day in the same words that he did yesterday; and to imagin that God

will

will dislike or reject the good affections of our Prayer, meerly because they are every day express'd in the same form, is to suppose him a very captious Being, and one that is more taken with our words, than with our affections: the contrary of which he hath given sufficient proof of in this very particular, in that whereas he hath withdrawn from us (as I have prov'd at large) the inspiration of the words of our Prayer, and left them to the composure of our own or other mens invention, he still continues to inspire us with the affections of Prayer, and to excite them to a due activity. For to this, among other purposes, it is, that he hath promised to continue his Holy Spirit to us, to enable us to address our selves to him with devout and holy affections: thus *Gal.* 4. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father*: that is, by kindling devout and filial affections in your souls, inabling you to cry to God with all earnestness and assurance, as to a kind and merciful Father: and hence also we are said to Pray in or by the Holy Ghost, *Jude* 20. it being by him that those good affections are raised in us that we offer up to God in our Prayers: and therefore we may well be said to Pray by the Spirit, because it is by the Spirit that we are inspired with those holy affections, which are the soul of our Prayer; and accordingly the Spirit is said *to make intercession for us with sighs and groans, which are not to be uttered*, *Rom.* 8. 26. which words are far from asserting the inspiration of the matter and words of our Prayer, though they are urg'd by our Brethren for that purpose: for as for the matter of Prayer, here is not the least hint of the Spirits inspiring it, for as to that, the Christians, whom he speaks of, were well instructed already by their Christian Institution; but all that is affirm'd, is,

that

that the Spirit inabled them to offer up the matter of Prayer to God in a most devout and affectionate manner; with sighs and groans, that is, with earnest and flagrant affections. And as for the words of Prayer, the Text is so far from implying the inspiration of them, that it plainly tells us, that those sighs and groans which the Spirit inspired, were such as were not to be utter'd or worded. And surely to inspire us with affections that are too big for words, cannot imply the inspiration of words. So that the Spirit's interceeding for us with sighs and groans that are not to be utter'd, can imply no more, than his exciting in us the proper affections of Prayer; and in this sense he is said in the next Verse, *to make intercession for the Saints according to the will of God*, viz. by inabling them to offer up the matter of Prayer to God with such fervent and devout affections as are necessary to render it acceptable to him; which is properly to intercede for us; for as Christ, who is our Advocate in Heaven, doth offer up our Prayers to the Father, and inforce them with his own interceſſions; so his Spirit, who is our Advocate upon Earth, begets in us those affections which render our Prayers prevalent, and wings them with fervour and ardency; the one pleads with God for us in our own hearts, by kindling such desires there as render our Prayers acceptable to him; and the other pleads with him for us in Heaven, by presenting those desires, and soliciting their supply and acceptance. And thus you see what that standing and ordinary Operation is which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit in Prayer.

And now, before I proceed to determin the present case, I shall only farther inquire, what is meant by that Phrase of stinting and limiting the Spirit. In short therefore, to stint or limit the Spirit, is a modern

Phrase,

Phraſe, of which there is not the leaſt intimation in Scripture, or Antiquity; but 'tis a term of Art coin'd and invented by our Brethren, and appli'd only to the preſent controverſie, concerning the lawfulneſs of Forms of Prayer. Which, by the way, is a plain evidence, that this argument againſt Forms, *viz.* That they ſtint the Spirit, is very new, ſince, though Forms of Prayer were uſed not only in the Scripture Ages, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter, but alſo in all ſucceſſive Ages of Chriſtianity; yet, till very lately, we never heard one ſyllable of ſtinting or limiting the Spirit by them.

The meaning of which Phraſe is this; That by uſing Forms of Prayer, we hinder the Spirit from affording us ſome aſſiſtance in Prayer, which otherwiſe we might reaſonably expect from them: for ſo our Brethren explain the Phraſe, *viz.* That by confining our ſelves to a Form of Words, we reſtrain the Spirit from giving us that aſſiſtance, which he ordinarily vouchſafes in conceiv'd Prayer.

And now, having fully ſtated the Caſe, the reſolution of it will be ſhort and eaſie. It hath been ſhewn at large, that there are two ſorts of aſſiſtances in Prayer which the Scripture attributes to the Spirit; the firſt extraordinary, and temporary; *viz.* the immediate inſpiration of the matter, and words of Prayer: the ſecond ordinary, and abiding; *viz.* exciting the devotion, and proper affections of Prayer. If therefore the Spirit be ſtinted, hinder'd, or reſtrain'd, by Forms of Prayer, it muſt be either from inſpiring the words and matter, or from exciting the affections of Prayer; as for the latter, to which this Phraſe of ſtinting is never apply'd by our Brethren, I ſhall diſcourſe of it at large in the third Caſe, wherein I ſhall endeavour to prove, that Forms of Prayer are ſo far from reſtraining the devotion of it, that they very much promote

and improve it. And as for the former, *viz.* the inſpiration of the matter and words of Prayer, that I have prov'd was extraordinary, and intended only as other miraculous Gifts were, for the firſt propagation of the Goſpel; and therefore ſince as to this matter, the Spirit hath ſtinted himſelf, it's certain, that Forms of Prayer cannot ſtint him; for how can that be ſtinted which is not? and if now there be no ſuch thing as immediate inſpiration of Prayer, how can it be limited by a Form of Prayer? In a word, if the Spirit of his own accord hath long ſince withdrawn this Gift of inſpiration, how can it be now ſaid that he is reſtrain'd from communicating it by any cauſe without him?

Caſe II.

Whether the Uſe of Publick Forms, be not a ſinful neglect of the Miniſterial Gift of Prayer?

In order to the reſolution of which Caſe, it would be neceſſary to give a brief ſtate of it, according as it is put, and urg'd by our Brethren. By the Gift of Prayer then, they mean an ability to expreſs our minds to God in Prayer, or to offer up our deſires and affections to him in words, befitting the matter of them: which ability, ſay they, is given by God to his Miniſters, as a means of publick Prayer, and in order to their being the Mouths of their Congregations to God, to repreſent to him the common Caſes and Neceſſities of their People; and therefore ſince God, ſay they, hath given us this Gift, as a means of publick Devotion, and in order to our offering up the Prayers of the People, it may be juſtly queſtion'd, whether we may lawfully omit the uſe of it, by uſing publick Forms of other mens compoſure.

Now,

Now, before I enter into a particular consideration of this Case, I shall briefly premise these two things:

1. That this Case concerns the Clergy only, and not the Laity: For suppose that it be unlawful for Ministers to omit the use of their own abilities to express the Devotions of their Congregations, what is that to the People? are they accountable for their Ministers faults? or will God reject their sincere Devotions, because the Person that utters them is guilty of a sinful omission? if so, it will be of dangerous consequence to them to joyn in any publick Prayers at all, whether they be Forms, or Extemporary; they being every whit as accountable for the nonsense, impertinence, and irreverence of their Ministers in the latter, as for their omitting the use of their own abilities in the former: if therefore this omission be a sin, it is the sin of the Minister; as for the People, they joyn with him indeed, in offering up the matter of Prayer, which is contain'd in the Form he pronounces, but they join not with him in the omission of the use of his ability; that is his own proper act, and deed; and therefore if it be unlawful, it's he, and he only that is accountable for it: and if the matter of Prayer in which they join with him be good, and express'd in decent and suitable words, they join with him in nothing but what is acceptable to God, and 'tis not to be imagin'd that God will be angry with them, because he neglected to express their desires in words of his own composure and invention.

2. I shall also premise, that this is not the case of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, who, though they stand obliged to the constant use of a stated Liturgy, yet are not hereby restrain'd from the exercise of their own abilities in publick Prayer: for after they have finish'd the Service appointed in the Liturgy, they

are permitted to use their own conceiv'd Prayers in the Pulpit: in which they have the same liberty, that the dissenting Ministers can claim or pretend to; that is, to express in their own words all the matter of publick Prayer, with all the sobriety, affection, and seriousness they are able; And a long and unrestrain'd permission of our Governours, though it be against Law, is a kind of allowance, untill they reinforce the Law upon our parties, and some there are who believe the conceiv'd Prayers which we generally use to be expresly allow'd in our 55th Canon, which directs, *that before all Sermons, Lectures, and Homilies, the Preachers and Ministers shall move the People to join with them in Prayer, in this form, or to this effect, as briefly as conveniently they may.* Now that, *to this effect*, as it stands opposed to *this form*, is meant some Prayer of our own, composed to this purpose, seems in their opinion very probable from what is generally practised in the Church, which in doubtful cases, is the best explication of her meaning. Since therefore the use of our Liturgy doth not exclude the exercise of our Gift of Prayer, But leaves us free to exert it, so far as it is fit, that is, with *convenient brevity*, I see not how this Case can concern our Clergy; for if the evil of Forms consists in the Ministers omission of his own Gift, as this Case supposes, then where the use of Forms doth not oblige us to this omission, but leaves us as free to exercise this Gift, as those are who use no Forms at all, the supposed evil is remov'd from it.

Having premised these things, I shall proceed to a particular resolution of the Case, which I shall do in these following Propositions.

1. That this Ministerial Gift of Prayer, or ability to express in our own words the common Devotions of our Congregations to God, is either natural, or acquir'd. 'Tis true, if we had any reason to believe, that in their admission

admiſſion to holy Orders, God did inſpire his Miniſters with this ability, we might thence more plauſibly infer, that 'twas his will that we ſhould ordinarily exerciſe it, and that it was not lawful to neglect or omit it, by uſing Forms of other mens compoſure; it being unlikely that God ſhould inſpire them with an ability, which he did not intend they ſhould make uſe of: but of Gods inſpiring us in our Ordination with this Gift, or Ability, we have not only no promiſe in Scripture, which is the only foundation upon which we can reaſonably expect it; but in fact, we have no experience of any ſuch matter among us: for not only we, but the Diſſenting Miniſters muſt own, if they will ſpeak ingenuouſly, that juſt before their Ordination, they were as able to expreſs the Devotions of a Congregation, as they were juſt after; which ſhews that they had no new ability to Pray, inſpired in their Ordination: and as yet, I could never find any proof, either from Scripture, or Experience, that this ability to Pray in words of our own compoſure, had any thing more in it, than a promptneſs of invention and ſpeech; which ſome men have by nature, and which others have acquired by art and practice; and if ſo, this ability is no otherwiſe the Gift of God, than our natural ſtrength and vigour, or our skill in Languages and Hiſtory. And methinks it's very ſtrange, that after all this talk of the gift of Prayer, which is ſuppoſed ordinarily at leaſt to be conferr'd on rightly ordained Miniſters, our Brethren ſhould not be able to produce one Promiſe, wherein God hath ingag'd himſelf, to confer it; no nor one Text of Scripture, which implies ſuch a Promiſe; all that he hath promiſed his Miniſters is, to concur with their honeſt indeavours, ſo far forth as it's neceſſary to inable them to diſcharge the Duties of their Office, and to ſuppoſe that they

cannot

cannot do this, without praying *Extempore*, or in their own words, is to take the matter in queſtion, for granted.

2. That this natural or acquired Gift, is no where appropriated by God to prayer, but left common to other uſes, and purpoſes; For though in Miniſters eſpecially, it is ordinarily called a Gift of Prayer, yet it is no where ſtiled ſo in Scripture: indeed the ability of praying in unknown languages, is once called a Gift, as I obſerved before, but as for this ordinary ability, whether natural, or acquir'd, of praying in our native language, it is no where ſpoken of in Scripture, under the name of a Gift of Prayer, nor is there the leaſt mention of any ſuch ability given by God to men, purely to inable them to pray, and unleſs our Brethren can produce ſome Text of Scripture, which yet they never attempted, wherein God hath appropriated this Gift to the purpoſe of Prayer, they muſt give us leave to conclude, that he hath left it common to all other honeſt uſes, and purpoſes that it can be apply'd to; and that in ſhort, it is nothing but a freedom of Utterance, and Elocution, which in ſome is natural, and in ſome acquired, by which they are enabled readily to expreſs their minds to God, or men; and therefore to how many honeſt purpoſes this common Gift of God is applicable, to ſo many it's deſign'd, and intended; and conſequently, may as well be call'd the Gift of Converſation in good company, and the Gift of pleading at the Bar, and the Gift of diſputing in the Schools, or the Gift of Oratory in the *Forum*, as the Gift of Prayer in Private, or Publick worſhip; it being all but one and the ſame Gift applied to ſeveral uſes, and purpoſes; accordingly we find that thoſe who have this Gift, have it not only while they are ſpeaking in Prayer, but when they are ſpeaking

ing upon other occaſions; and that ordinarily they can expreſs themſelves to Men with the ſame readineſs, and fluency in converſation, as they expreſs their minds to God in Prayer, which is a plain argument that their Gift is not appropriate to Prayer, but common to all the other uſes, and purpoſes of Elocution.

3. That this Gift of utterance not being appropriated by God to Prayer, may upon juſt reaſon, be as lawfully omitted in Prayer, as in any other uſe or purpoſe 'tis deſigned for: I do confeſs had God any where appropriated it to the end of Prayer, thoſe who have it, were obliged to uſe it to that end, and to omit it ordinarily, by confining themſelves to forms of other mens inditing, would be to neglect a means of Prayer of Gods ſpecial appointment and inſtitution; for had he any where intimated to us, that he gave it us purely to inable us to pray without any reſpect to any other end, we could not have omitted the uſe of it in Prayer without croſſing his intention, and fruſtrating him of the only end for which he intended it, but ſince he hath given us no ſuch intimation, we may juſtly conclude that he intends it in common for all thoſe honeſt ends to which it is applicable, and if ſo, 'tis no more unlawful to omit uſing it to one end than to another, ſo that either it muſt be wholly unlawful to omit uſing our own Elocution to any purpoſe whatſoever whereunto it may be honeſtly applied, or it muſt be lawful to omit it in Prayer, and conſequently ſuppoſing I have this Gift of utterance, either I may not uſe a form in petitioning my Prince, or a Court of Juſtice, or I may uſe a form in addreſſing my ſelf to God in Prayer, ſince my Gift is common to both theſe purpoſes, and no more appropriated to the one than the other; in ſhort therefore, as for thoſe common Gifts of

God

God which are applicable to ſundry purpoſes, and which he intends no more for one than for another, it is left to our own liberty and diſcretion, whether we will apply them to this or that particular purpoſe or no, and no man is obliged to uſe his Gift to all thoſe juſt and lawful purpoſes it is capable of, and if he hath two Gifts which ſerve to the ſame purpoſe, there is no doubt but he may lawfully omit the one, and uſe the other as he ſees occaſion; and ſo it is with this Gift of utterance, which is naturally ſerviceable to ſundry excellent purpoſes, and among others to this of expreſſing our minds to God in Prayer, but it being ſerviceable to this in common with others, it is left to our liberty whether we will imploy it in this, in that, or in another purpoſe, and we are neither obliged to imploy it in all, nor in this more than in another, but if we have another Gift that is ſerviceable to the purpoſe of Prayer as well as this of utterance, it is left to our own pious diſcretion whether we will uſe this or the other; ſo that unleſs our Brethren can prove that this Gift of Utterance or Elocution is by ſpecial command of God made an appropriate means of Publick Prayer, they will never be able to prove, either that it is more unlawful to omit the uſe of it in Prayer, than in any other Office of Elocution, or that if we have any other means of Prayer, we are determined to this more than to another.

4. That to read our deſires to God in other Mens Words, is as much a means of Prayer, as to ſpeak them in our own, for to ſpeak in our own Words, is no otherwiſe a means of Publick Prayer, than as it ſerves to expreſs to God the Common caſes and neceſſities of the Congregation, and if theſe may be as well expreſt by Reading them in other Mens Words, as by ſpeaking them in our own, the end of Publick

Prayer

Prayer is as effectually ſerv'd by the one, as by the other, and ſure no man will deny, but that by a Form of Words compoſed by another, he may expreſs the common Devotions of a Congregation, as well as by extempore or premeditated words of his own invention; for this would be in effect to ſay, that none but himſelf can compoſe a publick Prayer, or at leaſt none ſo well as he; for if another Prayer may be as expreſſive of the Devotions of a Congregation as his own, I can ſee no reaſon why the reading of that may not be as proper a means of publick Prayer, as the ſpeaking of this; here then are two means of Prayer, *viz.* reading other mens Forms, and ſpeaking our own Conceptions, and therefore unleſs our Brethren can prove, that God hath expreſly choſen the one, and rejected the other, they muſt acknowledge both to be lawful; and if we cannot lawfully omit the one, becauſe it is a means of Prayer, neither can we lawfully omit the other, becauſe it is ſo too; and therefore either we muſt be obliged to uſe them both, which is impoſſible at the ſame time, or we muſt be left at liberty to uſe either, according to our own diſcretion. In ſum therefore, ſince we are not inſpired with any peculiar Gift of Prayer in our ordination, and ſince our Gift of praying in our own words is not appropriated by God to this uſe, but left in common to other purpoſes, and ſince what is not appropriated by God, may be lawfully omitted, when there are other means of Prayer, and ſince in fact there is another means of Prayer beſides this of praying in our own words, *viz.* praying in the words of others, which God hath left as free to us as the former, it plainly follows from the whole, that to omit the uſe of our own Gift, and in the ſtead of it to uſe that other Gift of praying in the words of others, is not in it ſelf any way ſinful or unlawful.

Caſe III.

Whether the Uſe of Publick Forms of Prayer doth not deaden the Devotion of Prayer?

For thus our Brethren argue, that by the command of God we are obliged not only to pray, but to pray with the utmoſt devotion we are able, and accordingly to uſe ſuch means of Prayer as are moſt apt to heighten and intend our devotion, and thus far we agree with them; if therefore Forms are in themſelves, and not through our fault and erroneous prejudice, leſs apt to quicken and raiſe devotion than conceiv'd Prayers, it will be granted of all hands, that this is a good Argument againſt the uſe of them. This therefore is the caſe wherein we differ, our Brethren ſay, that Forms of Publick Worſhip, (for 'tis that we are now diſcourſing of) are in themſelves apt to diſpirit and deaden the Devotions of thoſe that uſe them; we ſay the contrary, *viz.* that publick Forms are in themſelves more apt to improve and quicken the common Devotions, than Extemporary Prayers of the Miniſters own conceiving: In order therefore to the clearing and full reſolution of this Caſe, we will briefly enquire into theſe three things:

1. What theſe advantages to Publick Devotion are, which conceived, or extemporary Prayers pretend to?

2. Whether theſe Advantages are not for the moſt part fantaſtical and imaginary, and whether ſo far as they are real they are not much more peculiar to Forms than to extempore Prayer?

3. Whether beſides theſe common advantages publick Forms have not peculiar advantages, which conceiv'd Prayers cannot pretend to?

1. We

1. We will enquire what thoſe advantages to the publick Devotions are which conceiv'd or extempo-rary Prayers pretend to; in ſhort, it is pretended in the behalf of conceiv'd Prayers, that they do much more fix the attention, and raiſe the intention of the Peoples minds in Prayer, than publick Forms; that is, that they do more confine the rovings of mens thoughts in Prayer, and keep their minds more attentive to it, and that they do much more warm and enliven their affections in it; for, ſay our Brethren, the Devotions of the people are very much rais'd or deaden'd by the performance of the Miniſter, according as he is more or leſs devout in it; and as for the Miniſter, he muſt needs be much more devout in a Prayer of his own conceiving, than in the uſe of a publick Form; becauſe firſt, ſay they, 'tis impoſſible for him to keep his mind ſo attentive in reading a Prayer, as in conceiving one in his own mind, and ſpeaking it from his own conceptions; the care of performing which naturally bounds the wanderings of his thoughts, and keeps them more fixt and attentive; and ſecondly, becauſe when he utters his words immediately from his affections, his thoughts have not that ſcope to wander, as when he reads them out of a Book. And as conceived Prayer doth more fix the attention of the Miniſter, ſo it doth alſo more raiſe his intention, or in other words, more warm and inflame his affections; for firſt, whereas in reading a Form, his affections follow his words, and are raiſed and excited by them, in conceived Prayer, his words follow his affections, and are immediately utter'd from, and indited by them; and ſecondly, How is it poſſible, ſay they, that the words of another, which he reads out of a Form, ſhould ſo well expreſs his affe-

ctions as his own; beſides, thirdly, that while he is reading his Form, his ſoul is ſo intent in directing his eye to read, that it cannot direct its affections to God with that fervour and intention as it might do in conceiv'd Prayer. Theſe are the ſuppoſed helps which the Miniſters devotion, and from his the Peoples receive from conceiv'd Prayers, above what Forms of Prayer can afford: and as conceiv'd Prayer hath theſe peculiar advantages to raiſe the Miniſters devotion, and by his the Peoples, ſo it hath another advantage by which it more immediately influences the devotion of the People, *viz.* that the matter of it is ſtill expreſt in new words, which muſt needs much more affect the attention of the People, than when it is always expreſt in the ſame words without any variation; And this, ſo far as I can gather from the Writings of our Brethren, is the ſum of what they plead in behalf of conceiv'd Prayer, as to its peculiar advantageouſneſs to publick Devotion above ſtated Forms.

2. Therefore we will inquire whether theſe Advantages are not in a great meaſure imaginary, and whether ſo far as they are real, they are not much more peculiar to Forms, than to conceiv'd Prayer. And here I will readily grant, that by expreſſing a ſerious and devout affection, the Miniſter doth really advantage the Devotion of the Congregation, even as by his good example in all other things he excites the people to a pious and virtuous imitation; in whoſe eyes devotion never looks ſo amiable, as when 'tis expreſt in ſerious and well compos'd words, accompanied with a devout, a ſober, and affectionate behaviour: both which are equally neceſſary to excite the devotion of the People: if therefore it be really true, that the uſe of conceived or extempore Prayer is in its own nature

moſt apt to fix the attention, and excite the intention of the Miniſter in Prayer, it muſt be confeſt that herein it hath the advantage of Forms. Therefore we will inquire whether theſe advantages it pretends to, as to the exciting the Miniſters attention in Prayer, be real, or no: The firſt advantage is, that the very conceiving the matter of his Prayer, and ſpeaking it from his own conceptions, doth naturally more bind his attention, than the reading it out of a Form; but I beſeech you, what doth it more bind him to attend to? is it to attend to the words and phraſes? if ſo, then 'tis not to attend to the acts of Prayer or is it to attend to thoſe acts which are the proper buſineſs of Prayer? that is to be aſham'd of ſin, and to bewail it in confeſſion, to be ſenſible of the common wants, and common dependancies upon God for ſupply in petition, to admire God's perfections, and gratefully commemorate his goodneſs in praiſe and thankſgiving; for in theſe things the true devotion both of Miniſter and People conſiſts; and 'tis only by being an example of theſe in his Prayer, that the Miniſter excites the devotion of his people: 'tis by confeſſing ſin, as if he were aſham'd of, and ſorry for it, that he excites their ſhame and ſorrow; by petitioning for mercy, as if he were ſenſible of the want of it, and did heartily deſire it, and depended upon God for it, that he excites their ſenſe of need, and their deſire, and hope of relief, and ſupply; by praiſing and thanking God, as if he heartily admired his excellencies, and gratefully reſented his goodneſs that he excites their admiration and gratitude; that mode of Prayer therefore which is moſt apt to fix the Miniſters attention to theſe acts of devotion, muſt needs be moſt apt to excite the devotions of the people; Now as for the mode of praying from his own conceptions, I really think that it is much more apt to unfix

unfix the Miniſters attention to theſe acts, than that of praying by a Form; becauſe it forces him to attend to other things at the ſame time, *viz.* the recollection of matter, and invention of ſutable expreſſions, which muſt more or leſs divert him from attending to the inward acts of devotion, according as his fancy and tongue are more or leſs pregnant and voluble; it being impoſſible for him to attend at the ſame time, to ſeveral things, as cloſely as he may to one: but when he prays by a Form, his matter and words are ready before him, and ſo he hath nothing elſe to do, but to attend to his devotion; and certainly when a man hath but one thing to do in Prayer, he may attend to that more fixedly and cloſely, than when he hath two or three: 'tis true, by being releaſed from attending to the invention of his matter and words, his mind is more at leiſure to wander, and inſtead of attending as he ought more cloſely to the acts of devotion, by imploying thoſe thoughts which in conceiv'd Prayer he imploys in invention, in a cloſer attention to the acts of devotion, he may, if he pleaſe, permit them to rove abroad; but if he doth, the fault is in himſelf, and not in the Form he prays by: the deſign of his Form is to releaſe his mind from all other buſineſs in Prayer, but only that of inward devotion, which is the life of Prayer, that ſo it may be the more attentive to it: but if inſtead of applying his mind to this deſign, he ſuffers it to wander abroad, he makes an ill uſe of a good thing, and converts that which is in it ſelf a help to devotion, into an occaſion of indevotion: But 'tis objected, that while his thoughts are imployed in inventing the matter and words of his Prayer, they are attending to the duty of Prayer, and while they are ſo they are well imploy'd, though they ſhould not be ſo attentively fixt upon the inward devo-

devotion of Prayer, as they might be in the uſe of a Form: to which in ſhort I anſwer, That to invent the matter and words of Prayer, is not to pray, but to ſtudy a Prayer; and till our Brethren have proved, that our inventing the matter and words, is a part of our duty of Prayer, which is the Queſtion in debate between us, we can by no means grant, that our attention to it is attending to the duty of Prayer; we believe that when we pray devoutly by a Form, we diſcharge the whole duty of Prayer, though we do not invent the matter and words our ſelves, and when we ſee the contrary proved, we will not only yield that to attend to inventing, is to attend to the duty of Prayer; but that it is unlawful to pray by a Form: but in the mean time we can yield neither one, nor t'other. Seeing then that Forms are in themſelves more apt to fix the Miniſters attention to the inward acts of devotion, and ſeeing that 'tis by attending to theſe acts, or at leaſt by ſeeming to do ſo, that he influences the attention of the people, it neceſſarily follows, that in this reſpect Forms are more advantageous to publick devotion, than conceiv'd or extemporary Prayer. But then,

2. It is pretended that conceiv'd Prayer is in it ſelf more apt to fix the Miniſters attention in Prayer than Forms, becauſe in conceiv'd Prayer he utters his words immediately from his affections, by reaſon of which his thoughts have not that ſcope to wander, as when he reads them out of a Book: to which, in ſhort, I anſwer, That if he hath devout affections, he may utter his words as immediately from his affections in a Form, as in a conceiv'd Prayer; and therefore this pretence is altogether inſignificant; for his own invention is as much a *medium* between his affections and utterance in Praying extempore, as the Book in praying

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ing by a Form; as for inſtance, ſuppoſe that in confeſſing ſin, he be affected with ſhame and ſorrow, he cannot expreſs it in words, but by uſing his own invention, or a Form, and whether he uſes one or t'other, he uſes a *medium* to expreſs it; and why thoſe words which he reads ſhould not be as immediate to his affections as thoſe which he invents, provided they do as fully expreſs them, I am not able to apprehend; in ſhort therefore, if he hath devout affections, they will at leaſt as much confine his thoughts from wandering when he prays by Form, as when he prays Extempore, if he hath not, he cannot utter his words from his affections, either in the one or t'other.

2. We will inquire whether thoſe advantages which our Brethren aſcribe to conceiv'd Prayer above Forms, as to the raiſing the Miniſters intention in Prayer, be real, or no: firſt they pretend that in reading a Form, his affections follow his words, and are raiſed and excited by them: whereas in praying extempore, his words follow his affections. This I confeſs is a very curious diſtinction, but I am not able to apprehend either what foundation there is for it, or how it is applicable to the matter; for firſt what neceſſity is there either that his affections ſhould follow his words in a Form, more than in a conceiv'd Prayer, or that his words ſhould follow his affections in a conceiv'd Prayer, more than in a Form? why may not a man be devoutly affected with the matter he prays for, before he expreſſes it in a Form of words, as well as before he expreſſes it extempore? ſince if he be acquainted with the Form, he cannot but know before-hand what he is to pray for in it; and therefore if he be truly devout, cannot but be affected with it, before he prays for it; and ſo on the other hand, why may not a man as well be unaffected with the matter he prays for in conceiv'd Prayer,

Prayer, till he hath expreſt it, as with the matter he prays for in a Form? or what reaſon can be aſſign'd, why the affection may not follow the words, and be excited by them in the one, as well as in the other? may not a man pray inconſiderately, and ſuffer his tongue, to run before his heart in both? and may not his affections which were before aſleep, be awakened by the ſound of his words in either? In ſhort therefore, ſince in praying by a Form, a man may know as well at leaſt, and hath as much time to conſider the matter he is to pray for before-hand, as in praying extempore; what reaſon is there why it ſhould be more difficult for him to affect his ſoul before-hand with it in the one, than in the other? and if it be equally hard and eaſie in both, than 'tis equally poſſible for his affections to go before, or follow his words in either. But then ſecondly, ſuppoſe it were true, that in conceiv'd Prayer the words follow the affections, and in a Form the affections the words, how doth it from hence follow, that conceiv'd Prayer doth more intend and heighten the affections, than Forms? what reaſon can there be aſſign'd, why thoſe acts of inward affections, which follow our words in Prayer, ſhould not be as intenſe and vigorous as thoſe which go before them? why may not a man exert as flagrant an act of deſire, immediately after he hath expreſt his Petition, as immediately before, eſpecially if that be true which our Brethren affirm, and which moſt men find by experence; that the words of Prayer, if they are proper and expreſſive, do naturally quicken and excite the affections; ſo that if it be the matter only that excites the affections, they may be as vehemently excited after the words are ſpoken as before; if it be the words alſo, the affections muſt be leſs vehemently excited before the words, than after: in ſhort therefore, when the

Miniſter prays in publick, whether it be by Form, or extempore, he prays on, without making any long pauſes between one Petition and another, ſo that as ſoon as ever he hath conceiv'd the matter, he expreſſes it, and whether it be immediately before or immediately after, or while he is expreſſing it, that he joyns his affection to it, there can be no reaſon aſſign'd, if it be the matter he joyns them to, why he ſhould more affect it now, than then, there being nothing in the order of before or after, to raiſe and excite his affection: and if ſo, his affections following his words, though it were neceſſary to his praying by a Form, can be no diſadvantage to his Devotion, nor the contrary an advantage to it, though it were neceſſary to his praying extempore: but then ſecondly, it is pretended that the Miniſter cannot ſo well expreſs his devout affections in other mens words, as in his own, and therefore when he prays in a Form of words of other mens compoſure, 'tis impoſſible his affections ſhould be ſo livelily repreſented, as when he prays extempore: To which in ſhort I anſwer, That the Miniſters buſineſs in publick Prayer is not to expreſs the degrees and heighths of his own affections, or to acquaint God of the particular and extraordinary fervencies of his own ſoul: for in publick he prays as the common mouth of the Congregation, and therefore he ought not to expreſs to God in the name of the People, any matter that is peculiar to himſelf, or to repreſent his own particular extraordinary fervours, as the common caſe of the Congregation, but his words ought to be ſuch as every honeſt and ordinary Chriſtian may truly joyn with, as the ſenſe and meaning of his own ſoul; and for him to expreſs to God in the name of the People, ſuch heighths of Devotion as few or none of them are arrived to, is as bad as to confeſs in their names ſuch ſins to God, as few or none

none of them are guilty of. So that if the Minister hath such peculiar heights of affection as can be fitly expreſt only in his own words, he ought not to tel God of them in a publick Prayer, in which he is to expreſs nothing but what is the true and common ſenſe of every honeſt and ſincere Chriſtian; and this certainly may be as fitly expreſt in another mans words as in his own, unleſs we will ſuppoſe that no man can ſo well expreſs the common ſenſe of a Chriſtian Congregation, as he that prays extempore, yea, and that he himſelf cannot ſo fitly expreſs it in premoditated words, as in extemporary ones; neither of which I ſuppoſe any ſober Diſſenter will affirm. But then Thirdly and laſtly, it is alſo pretended, that in the uſe of Forms, the Miniſters ſoul is ſo ingaged in directing his eye to read, that it cannot be ſo intenſly affected with what he prays for, as when he prays extempore; in anſwer to which, I leave the Reader to judge, whether the recollecting of the matter of Prayer, the diſpoſing of it into a due method, and inventing of proper phraſes to expreſs it, (neither of which are acts of Prayer, as I ſhew'd before) muſt not much more buſie and ingage the Miniſters ſoul when he is praying publickly, than the directing of his eye to read; that is, whether one that hath ſo perfect a habit of reading as that he can readily exerciſe it without imploying one thought about it, cannot read a Prayer more eaſily, than invent one? for ſo much eaſier as it is to read than to invent a Prayer, ſo much leſs his ſoul hath to divert it from being affected with what he prays for when he prays by a Form, than when he prays extempore. And thus you ſee that thoſe advantages which are aſcribed to conceiv'd Prayer, as to the raiſing the Miniſters Devotion, are ſuch as are either imaginary, or as ought rather to be aſcribed to Forms.

But it is pretended, that Forms of Prayer do not only deaden the Miniſters Devotion, and ſo by conſequence the Peoples, but that they do alſo deaden the Peoples by a more direct and immediate influence, becauſe they ſtill expreſs the matter of Prayer in the ſame words, which when the People have often heard, will be apt to cloy their attention, whereas the very newneſs and variety of words, in which conceiv'd Prayers are expreſt, doth naturally awaken and entertain their minds and keep them more fixt and intent. For anſwer whereunto, let us conſider upon what it is that this novelty and variety of expreſſion doth keep our minds ſo fixt and intent on; is it upon the matter of Prayer? doubtleſs, No; for that is generally the ſame, eſpecially the matter of publick Prayer, and therefore if it were that that fixt our minds, 'twould as well do it in the ſame as in new and varied expreſſions; and ſince the matter of publick Prayer is old, and for the main will be always ſo, why ſhould it not as well affect us in old words as in new, provided they expreſt it with equal propriety and fitneſs; but if it be meerly the newneſs of the phraſe 'tis expreſs'd in, that fixes their minds: there is nothing in it but a meer ſurpriſe and amuſement of their fancies, which inſtead of fixing doth unfix their minds from the internal acts of Prayer, and divert its attention from the devotion to the oratory of it; ſo that this fixation of their minds on the novelty of the phraſe and method of Prayer, is ſo far from being an advantage, that 'tis a diſtraction to their devotion. As for Forms of Prayer, there is no doubt but they may be compoſed with the ſame advantage of expreſſion, and pronounced with the ſame affection as the Prayers of our own extempore compoſure, and if they are ſo, they will have the ſame advantage of the muſick of ſpeech to excite the Devotions of the People;

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but as for novelty of method and expreſſion, that may indeed entertain their minds and divert them from roving out to other objects, but even this entertainment is a roving and excurſion of their minds from the acts of Prayer, which, while they are amuſed with the novelty of the phraſe and method of the Prayer, can be no more intent on the devotion of it, than while they are buſied about ſecular objects and affairs. And indeed that ſeeming devotion that is raiſed in the minds of the People by the gingling of the Miniſters words about their fancies, is generally falſe and counterfeit, for as words do naturally impreſs the fancy, ſo the fancy doth naturally excite the ſenſitive affections; ſo that when the affections are excited meerly by the art and muſick of the words of Prayer, it is not Devotion but Mechaniſm; for there is no doubt but men may be and many times are ſtrangely affected with the words of Prayer, when they have not the leaſt ſpark of true devotion to the matter of it; for when they fancy the matter of Prayer, and are affected with it meerly for the ſake of the words, the movement of their affection will ceaſe as ſoon as the impreſſion is worn out which the words make upon their fancies, and if in the mean time they happen to hear any other matter expreſt in the ſame affectionate words, they will in all probability be as much affected with it, as they are now with the matter of Prayer, but if the mind be truly devout and doth affect the matter of Prayer for it ſelf and not for the ſake of the words, I cannot imagin how new words ſhould any way advantage its devotion, unleſs they were to expreſs new matter. Since therefore the matter of publick Prayer neither is nor ought to be new, unleſs it be upon extraordinary publick emergencies, what colour of reaſon can there be aſſign'd, why the devotion of the hearers ſhould be

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more affected with it in new words than in old, supposing it be expressed and pronounc'd with the same propriety and affection in both. And thus I have shewn that those advantages of publick Devotion, which are pretended to be peculiar to conceiv'd Prayers, are for the most part imaginary, and that so far forth as they are real they are more peculiar to Forms of Prayer, I proceed to the third and last enquiry, viz.

3. Whether there are not sundry advantages of publick Devotion peculiar to Forms of Prayer, which conceived Prayers cannot pretend to? That there are, I do affirm, and will indeavour to prove by these following Instances.

1. One great advantage that is peculiar to publick Forms of Prayer, is, That the People may address themselves to them with greater preparation; for if they please, they may peruse the words before-hand, and consider the sense and matter of them, and indeavour to affect their minds with it; as for instance, when I know before-hand what words my sins will be confest in, when I am to joyn in the publick Devotions, I can consider before-hand the sense and meaning of them, and prepare such affections as are sutable to them; as suppose the confession be that of our Church's Liturgy, wherein we begin with *Almighty and most merciful Father*; I can consider the meaning of these words before I come to Church; and from the consideration of God's almighty and most merciful nature, excite my affections to an awful dread of his power, and an ingenuous sense of his mercy; by which, when I come to joyn with these words in the publick confession, I shall be duely affected with the sense of them, and my soul will be ready melted into all that filial sorrow and humiliation for my sin, which the consideration that I have offended by it an Almighty and most merciful

merciful Father suggests; and so if I consider, and apply before-hand all the rest of the confession, I shall thereby tune and set my affections to the sense and matter of each particular phrase and expression in it; which 'twill be impossible for me to do when I am to joyn with an extempore Prayer; because I cannot know before-hand what the phrases and expressions of it will be; besides which, upon the words of publick Forms, there may be written excellent Paraphrases and Meditations, such as is that of the *Companion to the Temple*; by reading of which the Devotions of the People may be very much excited and improved; which is such an advantage as the words of extempore Prayer will not admit of.

2. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That in joining with them the People may pray with more understanding, than they can well be supposed to do in conceiv'd and extempore Prayer, wherein generally the Minister is forc'd to make use of such words and expressions as come first to hand, having not leisure enough to pick and choose his words, without making long and undecent pauses and interruptions, so that sometimes he is fain to use a hard word, which perhaps not half the People understand, because an easier doth not come to his mind, and sometimes to intangle his expressions with long Parentheses, sometimes to darken his matter with far fetch'd Metaphors, or to express it by halfs in broken Sentences, and sometimes to run out his Periods to an inordinate length, by which the sense of them is very much clouded and obscur'd: these and such like inconveniences all the World knows do very commonly attend extempore Effusions; and let a mans fancy and tongue be never so fluent and voluble, he can never be so secure of expressing himself intelligibly to the People when he prays

prayers extempore, as he might be if he took time enough before-hand to chooſe his words, and form his expreſſions, ſo that the People may be much more ſecure of underſtanding what they pray for when they joyn with a Form, than when they joyn with an extempore Prayer; for to be ſure in compoſing publick Forms more care will be taken of the phraſe, that the words may fit the matter, and expreſs it intelligibly to the People, than there can be in extempore Prayer; which admits of no long conſideration, no alteration upon ſecond thoughts, no after-ſcanning or reviſal, as Forms of Prayer do, but it muſt paſs as it happens, whether it be intelligible or no, by reaſon of which thoſe who *occupy the room of the unlearned*, are many times forc'd to break off praying for want of underſtanding what the words and expreſſions of the Prayer mean; for whether the Prayer be ſpoken *in an unknown Tongue*, or in words that are unintelligible to the People, it is all one to them, for ſtill their *underſtanding is unfruitful*, and ſo long their devotion muſt be broken and interrupted.

3. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That the People may joyn with them with much more faith and aſſurance, than they can with extempore Prayers; it muſt doubtleſs be of great advantage to a mans devotion in publick, to be ſatisfied before-hand that the matter he is to pray for is good and acceptable to God; for by this means he will be inabled to pray on with a ſtronger faith and ſurer hope of being heard and accepted; but this a man can never be ſatisfied of aforehand, that joyns in extempore Prayer, unleſs he hath an implicit faith in his Miniſter, that he will ſay nothing to God but what is true, nor ask any thing of him but what is lawful; which how he can certainly depend on, I cannot imagin, eſpecially conſi-

dering

ſidering that the Miniſter who prays is many times a ſtranger to him, both as to his perſon and principles, and for all that he knows may be very erronious, raſh, and unadviſed, or very ignorant of what is matter of Prayer, and what not; And even thoſe Miniſters whom he knows, and can beſt confide in, are not always ſo very ſure of their hands, but that ſome times they may miſtake their paſſion for their zeal, and reak their anger or faction in their Prayers, or in the heat and hurry of ſpeaking what comes next, let drop an error before they are aware, or expreſs themſelves ſo doubtfully, or unadviſedly, that an honeſt and diſcerning mind may not be able to joyn with him; ſo that in joyning with an extempore Prayer, it is very neceſſary, (as hath been obſerved by an excellent Divine upon this Argument) that as we go along with the Miniſter, we ſhould judge of what he ſaith before our hearts conſent to it, and if it ſhould ſo happen, that by reaſon of the novelty, or ambiguity, affectation, or indigeſtedneſs of his expreſſions, or any ſuch rub in our way, we cannot readily judge, but are fain to heſitate, and deliberate upon this, or that paſſage; in the mean time he who prays is gone on, and now upon a new ſubject, and we are left behind, and at a loſs, and perhaps miſerably confounded before our Devotion can cloſe in again, and no ſooner it may be, is it well fixt, but 'tis led away again into the ſame inconveniency and maze: all which may be eaſily prevented by the uſe of publick Forms; of the matter and expreſſions of which, the People may eaſily ſatisfie themſelves aforehand, and when this is done, they will have nothing elſe to do, but to pray and keep their holy affections a going, they will have no new Judgment to make of what is ſaid, no doubtful phraſe or matter to examin, and their judgment being ſatisfied before

they begin to pray, with the words and matter of the Prayer, their devotion may go on with it, without pauſe or ſtop in an even and uninterrupted current.

4. Another advantage peculiar to publick Forms, is, That they have much leſs in them to divert the affections of the People from the matter of Prayer. For as for extempore Prayer, it is very apt to diſturb the devotion of the People, whether it be well or ill perform'd, if he who performs it heſitates, or blunders, or expreſſes himſelf in crude, undecent, or fantaſtick phraſes, inſtead of attending to the matter, and joyning their affections with it, they will in all probability be pitying, or contemning him, carping at what comes next, and running deſcants on his weakneſs and impertinence; if he perform well, and his method be orderly and artificial, his matter good, and his expreſſions fluent and apt, and eaſie, they will in all probability be admiring his parts, and entertaining their curioſity with the elegancy of his phraſe, the ſolidity and promptneſs of his judgment, and the art and finery of his compoſure; either of which muſt very much divert and call off their affections from the matter; whereas while they are joyning in publick Forms, to which they have been accuſtomed, and in which neither the ſtrength, nor weakneſs of the Miniſters parts appears, they have none of all theſe ſnares to intangle their devotion: for being uſed to the words, and phraſe, and method, they have no temptation to concern their minds any farther about them, than as they convey the matter of the Prayer to them, and having none of the above-named diverſions, to carry away their minds from the matter, they may doubtleſs, if they pleaſe, attend to it with much more fervour and affection.

5. Ano-

5. Another peculiar advantage to the Peoples Devotion in joyning with publick Forms, is, That they are more secur'd as to the decency and solemnity of their publick Worship; and I suppose there is no body will question, but that the decent and solemn performance of publick Worship, is highly advantageous to the Devotion of the People. But now whilst they joyn in extempore Prayers, the decency and solemnity of the performance, doth altogether depend upon the ability and present dispositedness of the Minister: So that if he happen to be a man of a mean elocution, of an unready memory, or an unfruitful invention, it is impossible the Office should be perform'd with that decency and solemnity, that is necessary to affect the minds, and excite the devotions of the People; yea, instead of that perhaps, the wretched dulness, the blundering, confusion, and impertinence of the performance, may turn their devotion into scorn and laughter; for of this I have seen too many sad experiments: but suppose the Minister be a man of pregnant parts, and ready invention and elocution, yea and of great Piety and Devotion too, yet 'tis possible he may be frequently liable to great indispositions of body, and mind, to dulness, and inadvertency, to wandering, and distraction of thoughts, to deficiencies of invention, and failures of memory, and incumbrances of mind, with outward cares and accidents; and if he be, what remedy is there, but that he must many times pray confusedly, and omit a great deal of the matter of Prayer, and utter a great deal of it in broken or undecent expressions? and how can he avoid being sometimes at a loss, both for words and matter, and being forc'd to supply the present defects of his invention, with fulsome repetitions of what went before? and how is it possible almost but that a great deal of flat and empty nonsense, a great many

crude and undigeſted conceptions, and raſh and unadvis'd expreſſions ſhould eſcape from his lips before he is aware? and this, if he hath any grain of modeſty in him, muſt, upon the leaſt reflection, put him into a greater confuſion, and ſo amaze, and bewilder him, that throughout the whole Prayer perhaps, he will hardly be able to recover himſelf to any conſiſtency of thoughts: Now is it not a hard caſe, that the decency and ſolemnity of the publick Prayers of a Congregation, ſhould depend upon the uncertain and variable temper and diſpoſition of one ſingle perſon; ſo as that if he happen to be indiſpos'd or diſorder'd in his body or mind, the Devotions of 500 or 1000 perſons muſt partake of his diſorders and diſtractions; for how much ſoever he is indiſpoſed, their Prayer can be no better than what he is able to pour out extempore, and how flatly, unadviſedly or confuſedly ſoever he prays, they muſt pray after him, or not pray at all; which vaſt inconvenience is wholly cur'd and prevented, by a well compos'd Form of Prayer, for how weak ſoever the Miniſters parts be, or how much ſoever he may be at preſent indiſpoſed, if he can but read diſtinctly and ſeriouſly, the Devotion of the People will not be at all affected or influenc'd by it; for whatſoever his parts, or preſent temper be, they will be ſure to find an orderly and methodical Prayer to joyn with; a Prayer that is comprehenſive of all their common caſes and neceſſities; that is ſober and good, mature and well adviſed as to the matter; that is full and plain and decent as to the phraſe and expreſſion of it; and in a word, that is every way ſuted to all the parts, and ends, and offices of publick Devotion; And if they pleaſe, they may ſatisfie themſelves before-hand, that there is nothing in the Prayer they are to joyn with, but what becomes publick Worſhip, which is the moſt ſerious and ſolemn thing in the World.

6. Ano-

6. Another peculiar advantage of publick Forms, is, That in joyning with them the People may be better ſecur'd of the reality and ſincerity of their own Devotion. For in joyning with extempore Prayers, there is no doubt but they may, and many times do miſtake the tickling of their fancies, for true and ſincere Devotion; for their fancies being ſurpriz'd, and amuſed, meerly by the novelty of the expreſſions, will naturally influence their ſenſitive paſſions, and chafe them into ſuch warmths as an undiſcerning judgment may eaſily miſtake for the holy fervours of Devotions; they find themſelves ſtrangely heated in the Prayer, and upon that immediately conclude, that they are wonderfully devout, without ever enquiring, whether it be the matter, or the phraſe and expreſſion that heats them; and ſo from thoſe tranſports of paſſion, which are meerly the effects of new and ſurpriſing words ſtriking briskly on their fancies, they many times take occaſion to flatter themſelves into a great opinion of their Piety and Godlineſs; whereas many of theſe perſons are notoriouſly immoral in their lives, and utterly diſaffected to the matter they pray for with ſo much ſeeming earneſtneſs and affection; which is a plain argument, that their affection is not to the matter, but meerly to the words and expreſſions; and in all probability the ſame ſurpriſingneſs of expreſſion would have as much effected them at a Play, as it doth at a Prayer: thus for inſtance, when they hear God or Chriſt ſpoken of, and their goodneſs and perfections preſented in a new and ſurpriſing ſtrain of expreſſions, their fancy many times is ſtrangely ſmitten with it, and this makes their ſpirits flow with a ſweet and placid torrent to their heart; and by their friſking about it, to ſooth and tickle it into great complacency and pleaſure; till at laſt it opens and dilates its orifices, and the grateful flood breaks in, and drowns

drowns it in delight and ravishment; and yet all this many times, instead of being a real complacency of their souls in God, is only a complacency of their fancies in the phrase by which he is described and represented, and had they heard the Hero of Play describ'd in the same phrase, they might probably have been moved to the same affection to him, as they are now to God and their Saviour; for the same kind of influence that new and surprising expressions have upon mens fancies in Prayer, they will have when applied to other matters; And if we will believe *Plutarch*, it was an ordinary thing with the *Greek* Sophists, by their honied words, surprising phrases, singing tones, and effeminate accents, to excite their Auditors into a kind of Bacchical Enthusiasm; and no doubt but those hearers, of whom he there speaks, who were wont to applaud their Orators at the end of their Declamations with a θείως, θεοφορήτως, δαιμονίως, ἀπροσίτως, divinely, heavenly, unimitably spoken; found themselves as much moved, as many a man doth at an extempore Prayer; who yet verily believes, that it is not meerly a movement of his fancy, but of his sincere and true devotion. This therefore is a great disadvantage of extempore Prayer in publick, that meerly by amusing the fancies of the people with the surprising novelty of its expressions, it puts them into fits of counterfeit devotion, and makes them many times imagin that they are heartily affected with the matter of the Prayers, when 'tis meerly the phrase of it that by striking on their fancies, moves their sensitive affection. But whether this movement of affection be fancy, or devotion, a man may much more easily distinguish when he joyns with a Form, than when he joyns with an extempore Prayer; for he being acquainted aforehand with the phrases and expressions of the Form, it is not to be supposed, that they should much

surprise

ſurpriſe and amuſe his fancy, and therefore if notwithſtanding that, he finds himſelf heartily affected in the Prayer, he may much more ſecurely conclude, that it is the matter, and not meerly the words that moves and affects him. And thus, with all plainneſs and ſincerity, I have indeavoured to repreſent thoſe peculiar advantages, which Forms of Prayer have above extempore ones, as to the quickening and improving the Devotions of the People: I might have given other Inſtances of it, but theſe I think are ſufficient to determin the caſe in debate, and to convince any unprejudic'd man, that pious and well compoſed Forms, are ſo far from deadening the publick Devotions, that they contribute ſundry great advantages to it. And indeed if publick Forms do deaden the Peoples Devotion, it muſt be either as they always confine the Devotions of the People to the ſame ſet of words, which, as I have proved at large, is a great advantage to their Devotion; or as they do *pro tempore* confine them to a certain ſet of words; in which ſenſe the Miniſters extempore Prayer is a Form to the People, and doth as much confine their Devotions to a certain ſet of words, *pro tempore*, as any ſtated Form whatſoever.

And now, if after all this, it be objected by our Brethren, that they find by Experience, which is the beſt Argument, that Forms do actually deaden their Devotion, I would beſeech them ſeriouſly to conſider, whether this experience of theirs be not founded in an unreaſonable prejudice; and if it be, whether it's fit that their unreaſonable prejudice ſhould preſcribe to the whole Church? it's certain, that there are other men as truly pious and devout as they, who find by experience, that joyning with the publick Forms is a great advantage to their Devotion; ſo that here is experience againſt experience; and certainly where there are two con-

contrary experiences of the ſame thing, they cannot both proceed from the nature of the thing; but one, or t'other muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the diſpoſition and temper of thoſe who are converſant about it: Now I have ſhew'd that Forms of Prayer are in themſelves real advantages to publick Devotion, and that they are ſo, there are many thouſands of good Chriſtians can atteſt by their own experience; and therefore if our Brethren do not experience the ſame, the fault muſt lie in their own prejudice, or temper, and there is no doubt to be made, but would they heartily indeavour to cure their own prejudice, and to diſpoſſeſs their minds of thoſe groundleſs Piques they have entertain'd againſt our Liturgy; would they but peruſe it with impartial eyes; conſider the contents, and labour to affect their minds with the ſenſe and matter of it; they would quickly find the ſame experience of its advantageouſneſs to publick devotion, as thoſe bleſſed Martyrs did who compos'd it, us'd, and at laſt died for it, and valued every Leaf of it as an ineſtimable treaſure; and as we ſhould conſent in our experience, ſo we ſhould alſo in our communion, and with one heart and one mouth glorifie our Father together.

FINIS.